

Ferguson Township Economic Development, Growth, and Innovation Strategic Master Plan

Project Title: Ferguson Township Economic Development, Growth, and Innovation Strategic Master Plan

Project Grantee: Township of Ferguson
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Counties Served: Centre County, Transitional County

Basic Agency: Not applicable for non-construction projects

Goal 1: Building Appalachian Business – Strengthen and diversity the region’s economy through inclusive economic development strategies and investments in entrepreneurship and business development. **Objective 1.2:** Pursue economic and enterprise development strategies that grow existing industries, support economic diversification, and advance economic prosperity at the regional level.

PA Strategy 1.2.11 – Promote regional partnerships and joint activities among government, business, and nonprofit organizations to reach common goals.

Purpose: The purpose of the Ferguson Township's Economic Development, Growth, and Innovation Strategy is to create a community-driven plan to help guide future growth in the Township.

Funding:	Non-Construction	Percentage	Source
ARC	\$75,000	50%	Area Development
Local:	\$75,000	50%	Ferguson Township Match (Committed)
Total	\$150,000	100%	

Project Description: The Township of Ferguson in Centre County is proposing to engage a consultant to assist with the development of an Economic Development, Growth, and Innovation Strategic Master Plan through a citizen participatory process to define priority areas such as developing and growing business and community, expanding housing and workforce opportunities with built connectivity, and economic health and resiliency for the Township to focus on in the next three to five years in support of regional efforts that aim to increase economic opportunities in Centre County.

Ferguson Township is a Home Rule Municipality situated in the southwestern corner of Centre County, immediately abutting Huntington County to the South, Halfmoon and Patton Townships to the north, and State College Borough, College and Harris Townships to the east. Ferguson Township is approximately 52-square miles, which are mostly rural and agriculture, but also includes a dense suburban core and light industrial corridor. The U.S. Census identifies Ferguson Township as one of the most rapidly growing municipalities within the Centre Region, experiencing 26 percent growth rate over the last ten-year decennial census period. The 2020 U.S. Census states that Ferguson Township had a population of 19,009. Ferguson Township is home to Penn State’s Ag Progress Days, largest outdoor agricultural exposition in the state, and three (3) Penn State Applied Research Laboratories with employment opportunities with some of the most innovative businesses in the Commonwealth including AccuWeather, Discovery Space, Minitab, and Videon Central. In the fall of 2023, Ferguson Township welcomed a brick-and-mortar retail store that premiers year-round local food experience with a future phase that will support the local agricultural community and entrepreneurial food businesses with commercial kitchen spaces for trainings and workshops on food safety.

Strategic Rationale: Ferguson Township is challenged with evolving its economic development activities that integrate traditional activities focused on agriculture and business development with new efforts that strengthen the business environment, workforce, housing, and infrastructure in response to the distinct needs of each of the three wards characterizing the Township. Stakeholders, assessments, and the market research report on the challenges of serving diverse landscapes and demographics represented in each of the three (3) Wards. Median household income nearly doubles moving west from Ward 3, which abuts Pennsylvania State University and the State College Borough and is mostly residential, to Ward 1 which is primarily rural, and agriculture driven. In addition to providing high-quality municipal services, the Township prioritizes preservation of open space, stormwater management, and attractive passive and active parks and aspires to foster economic growth and innovation with an equitable approach that maximizes opportunities for residents, businesses, visitors, and stakeholders. Anecdotally, there are discussions that indicate businesses and developers believe it is too difficult to do business in or with the Township. The new leadership of Ferguson Township realizes such challenges present additional barriers to achieving the economic prosperity desired by all. Intentional, methodical, and strategic efforts for economic resiliency and prosperity require human and social capital to be leveraged. Ferguson Township is suited to the local, regional, and county partnerships that facilitate discussions on topics such as how to bring diverse and appealing housing options into the community,

Ferguson Township Economic Development, Growth, and Innovation Strategic Master Plan

expand the beverage and food market, create entertainment that is accessible in walkable communities and attract visitors for spending in unique and experiential retail offerings.

The last official update of the [2006 strategic plan occurred in 2023](#). Goal 9 of the Ferguson Township Strategic Plan is “Partnerships and Regional Thinking,” and includes working toward regional cooperation on issues that affect the entire Centre Region. The proposed ARC project for the Economic, Development, Growth, and Innovation Strategic Master Plan corresponds specifically to this goal, to provide an outline and action steps for achieving it.

This project also furthers Goals 1, 3, 5, 6 and 7 [SEDA-COG's 2020 5-Year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy](#) which states:

1. Encourage the protection, modernization, and expansion of existing businesses and job opportunities, and where appropriate, encourage entrepreneurship and the recruitment of new business and industry consistent with the character of the Region.
3. Encourage the upgrading of skills and talents for the Region's workforce and the creation of family-sustaining wages.
5. Improve and expand infrastructure, flood resiliency, and conservation/greening efforts to enhance the older and rural centers throughout the area for business and economic development.
6. Encourage the promotion of the Region as a destination for travel, recreation, and tourism.
7. Cultivate efforts for the Region to become resilient in the face of natural disasters, pandemics, and economic downturns.

Collaborative Partnerships:

Ferguson Township is a member participant of the Centre Region Council of Governments with strong working relationships with the Pennsylvania State University, Centre County Government, Chamber of Business and Industry for Centre County, Centre County Industrial Development Corporation, SEDA-COG, DCED, among many others. The development of the proposed strategic master plan for economic development, growth, and innovation will identify a constructive, methodical approach to leveraging existing partnerships to achieve mutually identified goals.

Project Sustainability & Capacity:

Ferguson Township has substantial experience developing, managing, and executing strategic plans which are developed to be aligned with policies and goals set forth by the governing body. The proposed strategic plan for economic development, growth, and innovation will initially be a significant undertaking for adoption by elected officials and reviewed for annual adoption by resolution to ensure the deliverable from this project remains useful and prioritized as a resource and reference for directing work plans. The Township is supported by a staff of 68 full-time employees plus additional staffing approved in the 2023 Operating Budget which includes the Community Economic Development position. Ferguson Township prioritizes the development of the proposed strategic plan for economic development, growth, and innovation with a participatory and collaborative process that engages residents, businesses, prospective visitors, and stakeholders for input. It is recognized, however, that it is critical for a methodical, strategic and sustainable approach to be designed and executed for a sustainable outcome in the short and long term.

Impact Measures:

The proposed strategic plan for economic development, growth, and innovation will have an economic impact which will be measured through three (3) distinct categories which include inputs, outputs, and outcomes. Through a citizen and stakeholder participatory process, it is anticipated that the element of input will be represented by human and social capital for contributions that result in outputs. For example, the impact for measure will be the township's ability to effectively have residents, prospective residents, farmers, business owners, prospective businesses, visitors, Penn State University, local school districts, cyclist, and patrons. It is recognized that resident attendance must be compromised of young professionals, parents, senior citizens, and retirees. The human capital invested is tied to specific outputs for this project. For example, it is anticipated that through public engagements citizens will engage in an asset-based community development process to inform the final strategic plan for economic development, growth, and innovation. The measure of outputs will be based on the township's ability to hold at least three (3) face-to-face meetings, one within each ward, online sharing, surveys, and the development of publications that detail the responses. Additionally, it is recognized that a publication will be produced to document the results of the asset-based development for future reference. The outcome will be the final economic development, growth, and innovation document that informs how the Township will achieve economic prosperity through local and regional partnerships with defined priorities established through a participatory process.

Ferguson Township Economic Development, Growth, and Innovation Strategic Master Plan

Impact Measures:

Outputs	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 1 Community Served▪ 1 plan/report	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 1 Community Improved▪ 1 project identified for future implementation.

Congressional and Legislative Districts of:

PA House District 77 – Representative Scott Conklin

PA Senatorial PA District 35 – Senator Wayne Langerholc, Jr.

15th U.S. Congressional District – Glenn Thompson

PA U.S. Senators Senator Robert Casey and John Fetterman